



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Issue 136 – December 4, 2006

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Arizona's signature landmark has received yet another prestigious recognition, this time from the readers of *USA Today* and viewers of Good Morning America. Some of you may have been following along as these two organizations set out to name the Seven NEW Wonders of the World, which included locations like the Mayan Pyramids and the Polar ice caps. When voters were asked to select the eighth wonder, Grand Canyon came out on top, edging out attractions like the Great Wall of China and the Panama Canal. We are thrilled that Arizona's Grand Canyon is as much of a wonder to all of the voters as it is to those of us that live in the Grand Canyon State. Acknowledgements such as this are what keep Arizona at the top of travelers wish lists and make it a destination that visitors will come back to year after year. Congratulations to all of our partners at the Grand Canyon for this incredible recognition.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

AOT Presents "Branding Arizona" Workshop Series

The Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) is proud to present complimentary workshops on "Branding Arizona" at a location near you. Each workshop will cover what a brand is; how AOT is branding

Arizona; how the Arizona brand impacts your region; and how you can leverage the Arizona brand to differentiate your products in the marketplace. For more information or to register please contact Sarah Martins at 602-364-3687 or via email at smartins@azot.gov. Workshops will be held in the following locations:

December 6, 2006

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Shilo Inn

1550 Castle Dome Ave

Yuma, AZ 85365

December 13th, 2006

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Arizona Historical Society

Board Room

1300 North College Avenue

Tempe, AZ 85281

December 20, 2006

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort and Spa

San Pedro 1

3800 West Starr Boulevard

Tucson, AZ 85745

Requesting Calendar of Event Information

The Arizona Office of Tourism is requesting event information to be considered for the calendar of events posted at www.ArizonaGuide.com. The calendar is currently updated with events through March 2007. We would like to receive information for events that occur through June 2007 or beyond. Events to be considered must be open to the public and of interest to participants or spectators from neighboring communities across Arizona or from out of state. Submissions should include the date, including the year; community in which the event takes place, name of event; venue; venue address; description; admission, event time; phone number and/or Web site for the public to obtain additional information. Please include your contact information so that we may reach you with any questions we may have prior to posting your event. Photography to accompany any event listing is encouraged, and we can supply you with an image information form. December 2006 events may also be submitted immediately if the event is not already posted. Please check the Web site to see if your event is already included. Information on 2007 events should be submitted by January 1, 2007. If you have questions or would like an event submission form, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at Mmagnusson@azot.gov or by phone at 602-364-3695 or fax at 602-364-3702.

Trippin' with AOT

German Trade Show Opportunity

The Arizona Office of Tourism would like to invite you to join us at International Tourismus

Boerse (ITB), the largest travel industry trade show in the world. ITB will be held March 7 – 11, 2007 in Berlin, Germany and more than 65,000 trade delegates and 7,000 suppliers from 181 countries are expected to attend. ITB is not an appointment show, however, Arizona's representatives in Germany do schedule appointments with German, Austrian and Swiss tour operators and media representatives. Participation fee is \$2,000 for the first delegate and \$500 for the second delegate, plus travel expenses. Please contact Kristy McKinnon at kmckinnon@azot.gov or 602-364-3696 if you are interested in attending.

AOT Staff Meets with Grant Recipients

AOT staff recently visited four FY 07 Rural Tourism Development Grant (RTDGP) Award recipients. The purpose of the visits are for AOT to become familiar with the project first hand, to meet face-to-face with the project coordinator to explain the grant program and to answer any questions they might have regarding where to begin, reimbursement requests, project status reports, and to provide the project coordinator with other information on AOT-related programs. The first stop was the Town of Camp Verde. The Town of Camp Verde will use the \$35,250 award to place two historically correct cannons at strategic locations in Camp Verde and to purchase period uniforms. The Globe Miami Chamber of Commerce received \$50,000 for the Old Dominion Mine Park. Funds will be used for the construction and installation of warning and interpretive signage, armada for picnic tables and benches, an entrance sign and trash receptacles along the trail in the Old Dominion Mine Park. In Prescott, The George Phippen Memorial Foundation will use the \$18,200 award for the design, manufacturing, lighting, installation and landscaping of professional exterior and interior signage. The City of Benson received \$36,750 that will be used to construct and install a visually appealing and architecturally significant monument and LED sign display to create awareness of a multitude of special events in Benson and the surrounding areas. For more information, contact Karen Bult at 602-364-3708 or kbult@azot.gov.

The Sonoran Coastal Highway: A Catalyst for Regional Tourism and Economic Development

The Arizona-Mexico Commission held their bi-annual plenary session in Rocky Point, Sonora, on November 15-17, 2006. AOT was pleased to welcome Jonathon Walker from the Metropolitan Tucson Convention Visitors Bureau as the new co-chair of the Tourism committee. Governor Napolitano of Arizona and Governor Bours of Sonora joined the Tourism committee meeting where the Arizona Office of Tourism and the Sonoran Office of Tourism discussed several issues and made the following recommendations:

- 1.) Working with appropriate entities on both sides of the border to facilitate the flow of legitimate individual and group traffic at the ports of entry to strike an appropriate balance between homeland security and the facilitation of international travel. In addition, the recommended working with the 110th Congress on appropriate implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) to ensure that any measures taken do not discourage legitimate international travel or cross-border traffic. The Tourism Committee pledged to monitor and comment during public participation phases of the PASS Card criteria and implementation of WHTI and to disseminate information as it is made available by the DoS and DHS to the Tourism Committee, the tourism industry and traveling public of both Arizona and Sonora. They will also inform cross-border travelers about car permit requirements when visiting the State of Sonora and publicizing the information on the web and other informational materials.

2.) Implementing the principles of the Geotourism Charter as signed and witnessed by Governors Napolitano and Bours, working to release the National Geographic MapGuide and interactive web page and developing an educational program that builds on Geotourism principles for individual destinations in Arizona and Sonora. Also developing a comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign to promote the National Geographic MapGuide and to identify alternative opportunities to include the nominees that were not chosen to be on the map.

3.) Working to enhance travel facilitation between Arizona and Sonora by developing an agreement with AAA Arizona to have a memorandum of understanding in place on or before the next Plenary Session. The objective of the agreement is to expand roadside assistance services for AAA members when visiting the State of Sonora, adding value to the traveler's experience.

4.) The recommendation of the CANAMEX Corridor Coalition to seek Safety Enforcement Transportation Infrastructure Funding (SETIF) to expand the Lukeville port of entry to include the construction of two new reversible passenger vehicle lanes and inspection booths to increase its capacity to process passenger vehicles going to and from Rocky Point and will work to advance the project by writing letters of support to appropriate local, state and federal entities.

Industry News

The world's 8th wonder: Readers pick the Grand Canyon

What new can possibly be said about a place as old as time? After all, Arizona's Grand Canyon has been the object of hundreds of books, thousands of photos and millions of awe-inspired gasps. Historical accounts report visitors dropping to their knees in wonder upon eyeing the monolithic chasm. It is at once an icon, a metaphor and a cliché, capable of warping perspective and sharpening imagination. Witness its selection as the eighth New Wonder of the World by voters in a USA TODAY/Good Morning America poll, edging out, in order, the Panama Canal; the Great Wall of China; Machu Picchu, Peru; the Saturn V rocket; the Taj Mahal, India; Victoria Falls, Zambia/Zimbabwe; and Venice, Italy. A panel of experts earlier this month named seven new global wonders. (http://www.usatoday.com/travel/news/2006-11-23-7-wonders-grand-canyon_x.htm)

Weekend Getaways Growing in Popularity

The idea of a quick weekend getaway increasingly appeals to Americans, with 225 million such trips taken last year, an increase of more than 10 percent, according to the Travel Industry Association's U.S. Domestic Leisure Travel Report. The shoulder seasons of April/May and September/October have become prime weekend getaway times (32%), about equal to the summer months (31%). Weekend travelers are much more likely than the typical leisure traveler to stay in a hotel or bed and breakfast (58% vs. 44%). And weekend travelers include more activities on their trips than leisure travelers. The most popular activities during weekend trips are eating out, entertainment, shopping and sightseeing. Details at 202-408-2183. (*Special to TA*)

Hotel Chains Invest in Employees

Flush with cash from the recent boom in travel, major hotel chains at every price level are re-energizing their employee-training programs, from managers down to busboys. And the new-style training programs aren't limited to how to check in a guest or how to stack dishes in a pantry.

Instead, they're aiming to build distinctive organizational cultures that will add to the bottom line by keeping guests satisfied and loyal for years to come. Out of favor are scripted lines that hotel workers utter regardless of whether the customer appears happy, angry, tired or rushed. Now, hotel workers are being trained to speak for themselves, and to help guests in more meaningful and less conventional ways. *(Page 1B, USA Today)*

PricewaterhouseCoopers Predicts Record Holiday Demand

PricewaterhouseCoopers is forecasting that room night demand for the upcoming holiday period will increase by 2.6 percent over the prior year to a new record level of 2.39 million average occupied rooms per night between Nov. 23, 2006 and Jan. 1, 2007. The nine-day Christmas holiday period of Dec. 25, 2006 through Jan. 1, 2007 is forecast to increase by 1.7 percent to 48.8 percent, compared to the same period last year. The Thanksgiving and Christmas period room increases are less than the entire holiday period this year because both Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a Monday. When holidays occur on a weekend, there is more leisure travel from extended weekends and a concentration of travel in the interim week. *(ModernAgent.com)*

AirTran Airways to launch Phoenix-Atlanta service

Phoenixians with business and family in Atlanta now have a new choice in airlines. Low-cost player AirTran Airways Tuesday announced plans to begin nonstop service between Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport with three daily roundtrips beginning in February and March. The routes will be served by Boeing 737-700 aircraft. Introductory one-way fares, which must be booked by Dec. 14, are \$119. Walk-up coach tickets are expected to be \$319 one way and business class seats are expected to go for \$399. The new service to Phoenix comes as a result of AirTran Airways' recent online survey that asked consumers, "Where do you want low fares next?" AirTran Airways touts amenities including business class seating on every flight and free XM Satellite Radio programming at every seat. AirTran Airways, a subsidiary of Orlando, Fla.-based AirTran Holdings Inc. (NYSE:AAI), operates nearly 700 daily flights to 52 destinations. The airline's hub is at Hartsfield- Jackson Atlanta airport. *(Phoenix Business Journal 11/28/06)*

Traveling Relatives Prefer Hotels

Focusing on the upcoming fall and winter travel seasons, Expedia's latest Travel Trendwatch found that nearly a quarter (23%) of U.S. adults (about 55 million people) plan to travel by air during the upcoming Thanksgiving and winter holiday seasons. Of these, 80 percent plan to travel as much (45%) or more (35%) than they did last year. Key fall and winter travel trends and tips reported include: (1) Crowding on airlines, at airports and on freeways will likely echo this past summer's full loads. Smaller airline fleets and fewer seats, coupled with increasing demand, mean holiday flights this year may be as crowded as those this past summer, when planes were flying 90 to 100 percent full; (2) Holiday hotel rates are rising with demand; and (3) Despite higher rates, more holiday travelers are using hotels. In fact, more than 42 percent of U.S. adults said they would prefer to stay in a hotel if they were visiting family out of town for the holidays. *(Source: Internet Travel News)*

TIA and TBR Launch GETAPASSPORTNOW.COM

TIA in partnership with the Travel Business Roundtable has developed a consumer website, GetAPassportNow.com that details the new passport requirements for Western Hemisphere

travelers. The portal site provides information on passport deadlines for air, sea/cruise and land travel for the Western Hemisphere as well as links to the passport sections of U.S., Canadian and Mexican government websites.